

THE SHADOW OF PETER.

A Sermon preached
in the Church of St. James-the-Less, Ply-
mouth, on the occasion of the visit of the
National Catholic Congress to Plymouth
under the Presidency of H. E. Cardinal
Bourne, Archbishop of Westminster,
by Maurice Child, M.A., of Saint
John Baptist College, Oxford

Loquere
filiis
Israel



ut profi-
ciscantur

THE SOCIETY OF SS PETER & PAUL

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1913

The Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary

As in the 15th Century, in the days when England was really "merrye," William Caxton printed his "Boke of Courteseye," and admonished Lytyl John that

"while that ye be aboute honestly
To dresse yourself and do on your arraye
With your felawe wel and tretably
Our Lady Matins loke that ye saye
And this obseruaunce use ye every daye
With Prime and Houris withouten drede
The Blessed Lady wil quyte you your mede."

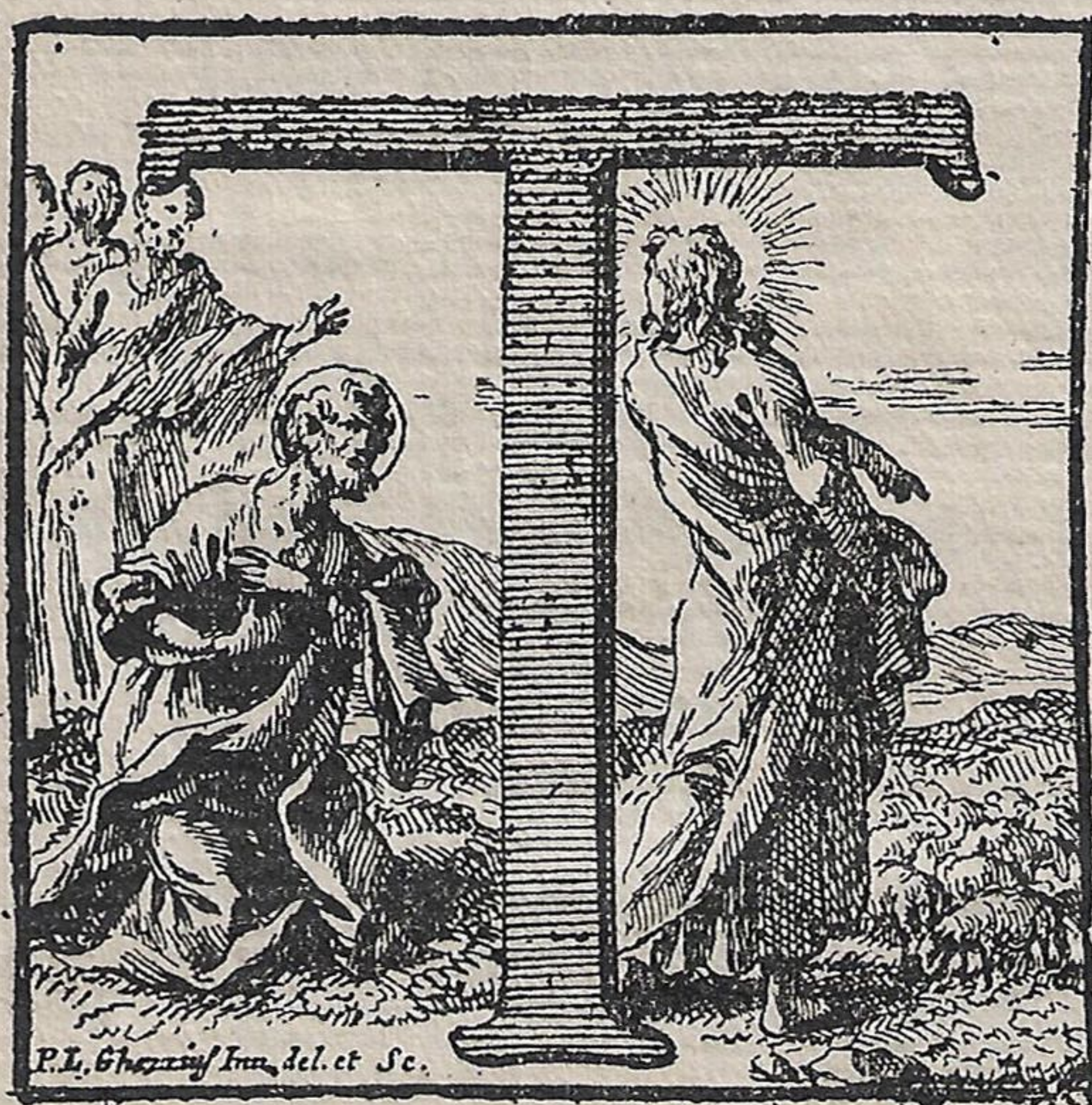
—so in this 20th Century the Society of SS. Peter and Paul would seek to rouse Catholics from their sad worship of material things, from the strife of strikes, and haunting Insurance Acts, to some degree of merriness, by printing for them the "Hours of Blessed Mary" in the vernacular, commonly called "The Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary." How sad our Caxton would be if he were to come again to visit this merrye England and to find all merriness gone from us, because so few lay folk will perform the "little service" due to her who makes us all merry by bringing to us him who is the Delight of Angels and men.

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The Shadow of Peter

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TAKE HEED WHAT THOU DOEST, THIS MAN IS A ROMAN.

These words are written in the twenty-sixth verse of the twenty-second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

You will have learned from this Lesson what it meant to be a Roman citizen. You have seen how St. Paul at Jerusalem made use of the privileges of his birth when he claimed the right of protection which was his due. And even as it was of old in civil matters, so also in matters of religion the name of Rome became of great prestige. So it has been always with the Eternal City. Whatsoever it cradled, that became mighty. To be born and baptized in the local Church of the martyred Apostles was held a great honour, and since the days of Augustine, sent by the Pope to teach us Christianity, the name and office of the Bishop of Rome have been held in high esteem. But—to make things more topical—how comes it then to-day that a Prince of that exalted Church, a Cardinal of Rome, can arrive in this town to preside at a Catholic Religious Congress, and, instead of

The Shadow

the welcome which some hundred years ago would have been his, English Churchmen stand aloof, and their general attitude may be summed up in the words of the text, spoken from a very different point of view : Take heed what thou doest, this man is a Roman.

Certainly it needs some explanation, though it would be much easier to let it go ; but as it is not the duty of a preacher to confine himself to harmless topics, I propose to speak to you to-night about the Roman Catholic Church, and especially that Church in England. There is no subject upon which one can be more easily misunderstood, even if one is not intentionally misrepresented. Prejudice is such, that though an English clergyman may welcome open and avowed heretics and schismatics to the Holy Communion, may join in sacrilegious wedlock divorced men and women, and even deny the truth of our Lord's Resurrection, he will still be considered an honest and broadminded man ; yet should a priest express, however timidly, his longing for reunion with the Holy See, from whose maternal breast we were fed with the first milk of Christ's Gospel, disloyal and dishonest he must be.

The time is ripe for very plain speaking on this subject, for an open avowal of our aims, for an absolute repudiation on our part of this attitude of English Churchmen. It is monstrously disloyal, it is grotesquely unfair. And since there is no great merit to be won in avoiding what we do not enjoy, let us now face the facts. Let us take heed what we do, for Rome is the rock from whence we were hewn.

Now it will be generally admitted that there is no official teaching for English Churchmen put forth by authority on this difficult question, neither is there any view which is acceptable to the majority. There is nothing common save that prejudice which taints and discolours every conception. For the sake of brevity I will summarize the various views or attitudes under three heads.

of Peter

1. Protestant. 2. High Church. 3. Anglo-Catholic.

But it should be borne in mind that each one of these divisions is capable of, and contains an infinite variety of subdivisions, which, springing from ignorance, as for the most part they do, it is well to ignore.

First then, the Protestant theory (we will not play with words) is that the Church of Rome is as some withered old Jezebel, corrupting the earth with spiritual fornication; without morals, without truth, without religion, bent only on compassing heaven and earth to make one proselyte, who receives credit for being ten times more a son of hell than themselves.

It would be an insult both to your intelligence and to your Christianity if I were to do more than state this view.

Secondly, there is the High Church view. I believe it to be of comparatively modern growth. It owes its popularity to the publication of the Bull on Anglican Orders. According to this theory the Church of Rome is so corrupt as to be unworthy of kindly consideration by Christians. Short of making oneself ridiculous it is not possible to deny her priesthood, or her episcopate, therefore side with the rationalistic critics who assert that St. Peter was never in Rome, that our Lord made no promises to St. Peter, that the Pope has no lawful jurisdiction at all, that his Church is in schism and heresy wherever it may be. I will characterize this as the "slap-back theory." You deny my orders, I will deny you; you hit me one way, I can hit back. You need hardly be reminded that such an attitude is clean contrary to the teaching of Jesus Christ. It is also childish and self-damnatory. At one moment you assert that the Church is One and Holy, at the next speak of it as three sundered branches, two of which are hopelessly corrupt; at one moment it is Catholic and Apostolic, at another, setting yourself up as judge of the quick and dead, you repudiate our Lord's own words, and malign the faith and confession of the Fathers and Saints, many of whom the English Church commemorates in her Calendar. At the same time you foul your own nest,

The Shadow

for you condemn the Church of your baptism to a thousand years of corrupt life, and all that is left for you to honour is the past three hundred years of hopeless neglect and sterile formalism, from which mire we are just beginning to lift our heads.

And so we come to the third point of view, which is commonly accepted among English Catholics. We must consider it carefully. According to this : The Church is One, and is in union, though not in external union, a fact which is greatly deplored and earnestly sought to be remedied by prayer. The Pope is Patriarch and Primate of all Christendom by virtue of the promises made to St. Peter, whose successor he is. From him we are separated by no fault of our own, "the Reformation settlement being forced upon England illegally and uncanonically in the teeth of the unanimous opposition of the Bishops and the greater majority of the Clergy." We find ourselves by Baptism members of the Church as it is in these Provinces of Canterbury and York. Here were we born, this must we adorn. And the submission of individuals to Rome is at the least, as Lord Halifax puts it, "walking from one room in a house to another room in the same house," very likely in so doing removing some supports from the first room and not contributing greatly to the decoration of the second ; or, at the most, an act of sublime stupidity or unconscious self-indulgence.

Our quarrel is then, not that the successor of St. Peter should claim to exercise his divine commission to feed Christ's sheep and lambs, but that he should, as this theory maintains, neglect his commission, and starve some of the sheep, and bar the door to other lambs. The question is one then, not of dogma, but of discipline. Certainly this presents a possible platform for Catholic English Churchmen. They recognize the position of the Roman Catholic Episcopate, and give to the Pope, as occasion offers, that honour which is his due as the Shepherd and Fisherman, the Pastor, the Primate, the

of Peter

Patriarch, the Rock, the Confirmer of his brethren even as our Lord himself ordained and said. Thus we need no longer fear an appeal to the faith of the great English Saints. Again and again we state and press our claim to an historical and doctrinal continuity with the Ecclesia Anglicana of ancient times, again and again we commemorate and pray for strength to follow in the steps of our most English, most patriotic and most national Saints, as St. Anselm, St. Aldhelm, St. Thomas of Canterbury; very well then, each one of them as Confessor or Martyr, both in life and in death spent themselves in the service of our national and established Church that it might remain loyal to the claims of the Vicar of Christ. Were they disloyal men? Were they dishonest men? God grant we may be even so! Still better perhaps, it is this theory which has taught Englishmen eagerly to seize every opportunity of joining in worship with their fellow-Christians of the Churches of France and Italy and Spain, and has striven to create that oneness of dogmatic faith between Rome and Canterbury and Constantinople, which must necessarily be brought about before Catholic communion can be again established. Only thus shall our Lord's last prayer be answered—"That they may all be one."

So far, I suppose, without wishing to commit anyone, most of you would be prepared to go, but when we come to the immediate occasion of this sermon, that a Catholic Congress is being held in this city in which we have no part, that a Cardinal of the Holy Roman and Apostolic Church comes to preside at it and all of us stand aside and do not join in their worship, what says this theory then?

Probably you all know, very likely it has been ringing from many pulpits in the Three Towns to-day. It is commonly taught and accepted now when any mention is made of the Roman Catholic Church in England: They have no right to be here at all, they have usurped a jurisdiction in this country which does not belong to

The Shadow

them, they have set up altar against altar, and Bishop against Bishop, and made a schism, they have thrust new Bishops into the old Catholic sees—go by all means and worship on the Continent with the Church of the country, but when you find it in this land, ignore it, rail at it, condemn it, have nothing but ill to say of it, as you are an honest man.

There it is. It is very dogmatic, very dogmatic indeed for a difficult question upon which it behoves us not to dogmatize. But I wish to submit to you, just for your consideration, that here this theory entirely breaks down. Go to the Continent, and what do you find? Altar after altar in every important town set up against the Bishop of the Diocese and under the Bishop of London. Go to Canada, and try and live loyal to this theory there. What will you find? Bishops of the English Church thrust in and claiming jurisdiction in dioceses and provinces which have been papal for generations. In Scotland, in Australia, in America you will find a similar state of things. But let us confine ourselves to England, and what is the result? Take one point only. As Catholics we hold that it is a matter of obligation under pain of sin to hear Mass every Sunday—yet for a period of nearly three centuries this would have been impossible for any English Churchman, the Communion being celebrated on an average four times a year in large churches, and perhaps once a month at St. Paul's Cathedral. You can find similar impossibilities for yourselves; and now that at last we are beginning to arise out of sleep, and possibly one-tenth of our churches proclaim the old faith and afford all the consolations of the Catholic Religion, we are to turn to this little band, this tiny organization, as it is in this land, who admittedly have fed their people all along, who have been hunted and hounded and harassed for centuries, who by heroic sacrifice have kept alive the spark of faith which by the help of God's grace we are striving to fan into a flame, we are to turn on them and say:

We are not grateful. Pack up your traps and clear

of Peter

out. Go and leave your flocks to the tender mercies of thousands of clergymen—half of whom would spurn them as penitents, would parody their religion, and stigmatize as rank idolatry their worship of the Son of God.

I ask you, is it reasonable? Is it rational? Has it the virtue of justice or common sense? It is only our innate conceit and our sluggish national pride that makes it possible for us even to think such things.

And so we must find another point of view. Our theory will not stand, it has buckled and smashed beneath the weight that has been put upon it. Therefore I submit to you, with no wish to dogmatize, this—that not only has this theory collapsed, but so also has the whole platform upon which it rests, I mean the theory, and it is only a mediæval theory, of territorial jurisdiction in the Catholic Church—in every part of it.

In the East, by permission of Orthodox Bishops, our priests minister to our own people, and sometimes also to their people. In Antioch there are no less than five Patriarch Archbishops, and though three of these are in communion with the Pope, they are not, obviously at least, in communion with each other, for they have each their own altars, each their own rites, clergy and ceremonies. Is that jurisdiction territorial?

Moreover this is not only a question of theory, but one of fact. Consider the position in this very town. The Bishop of Exeter claims jurisdiction over the territory of his Diocese of Exeter. To what does this amount? He has jurisdiction over this church, and St. Andrews, and the other English churches in the Three Towns, but what beyond? Can he close the Cathedral? Can he interdict the Presbyterian Church? Can he suspend the ministers of the many Methodist chapels? Of course not, he would not think of trying. Again, what jurisdiction has he over the hordes of people in this town who serve no god, go to no place of worship, and kiss no prelate's ring—indeed such a crowd as you might now find on the Hoe? None at all, alas! *Solvitur ambulando*,

The Shadow of Peter

in every diocese and province of the Church the matter is solved by walking round it. Therefore I put it to you that the jurisdiction of Christian Prelates is no longer over territory, but over souls ; and consequently there is no further schism, no further rent in the Body of Christ because we have a chaplaincy at Monte Carlo or a Bishop of Quebec, or because they have a Bishop of Plymouth.

Withdraw then all the hard words and bitter indictments. Have done with quarrels among friends. Rejoice in the efforts of others, even though on occasion they seem to conflict with your own. If you are smitten on one cheek, turn to them the other. Always render good for evil.

And therefore to-night, in complete loyalty to the Church of these Provinces of Canterbury and York—in the service of which let us hope both to live and die—I ask you to pray for your fellow Catholic Christians and fellow-townsmen under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Plymouth ; believing and knowing as we do, that all who bless one holy Name, and love one Mother, who plead one living Sacrifice, partake one holy Food, claim one absolution by the Precious Blood, who revere the tombs of the great martyr Apostles, and claim all the selfsame antidotes against death and hell, *are* in union real, vital, intense, by virtue of that Saving Host, Christ himself, whom all adore and of whom all adoring do partake.

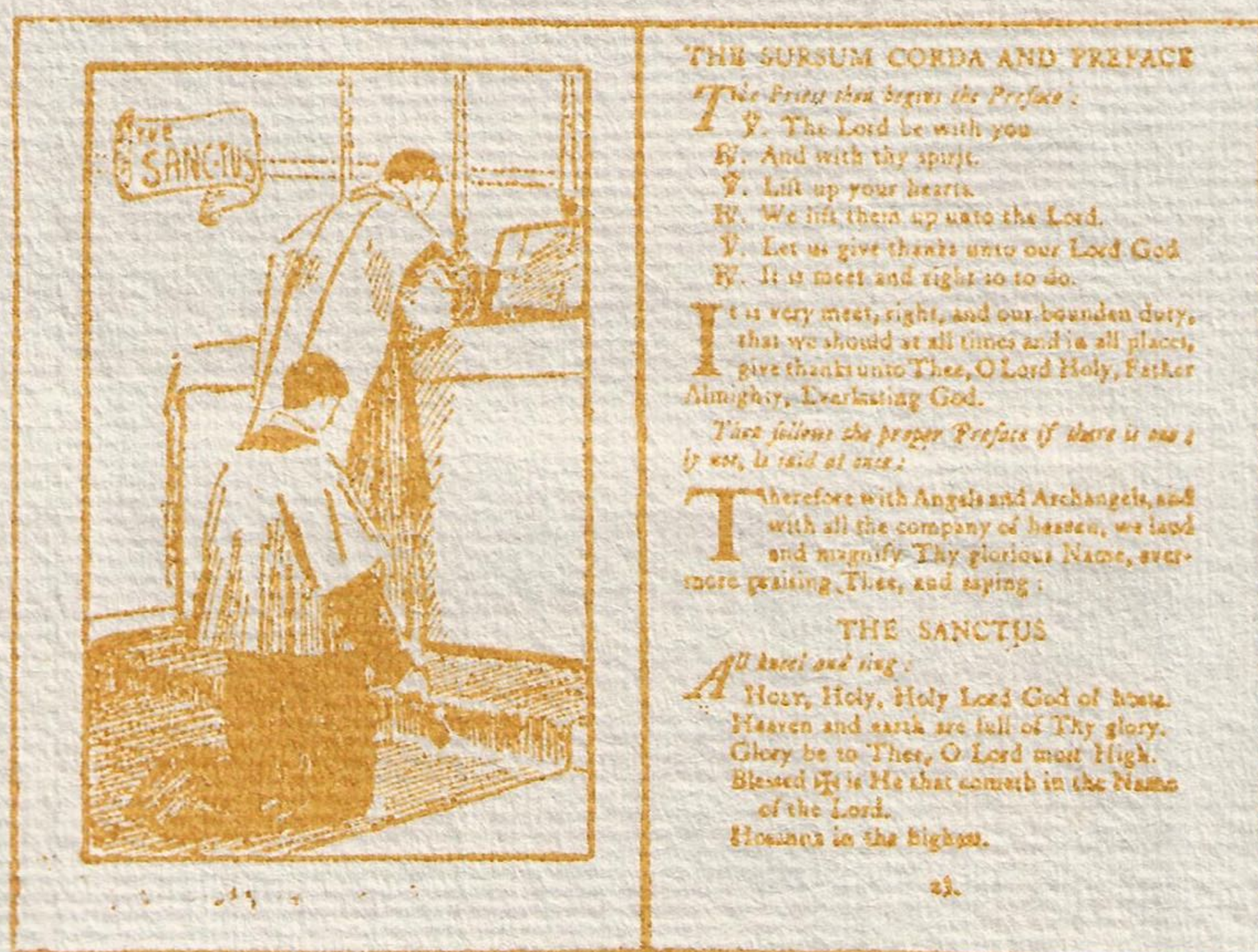
Lord Jesus Christ, who saidst to thine Apostles : Peace I leave with you, my Peace I give unto you : Regard not our sins, but the Faith of thy Church, and grant unto her that peace and unity which is agreeable to thy will. Who livest and reignest, One God, world without end. Amen.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

A.M.D.G.

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